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**State Government & Tribal Affairs**  
**Committee**

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**SSB 5776**

**Brief Description:** Regarding student fees, charges, and assessments.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators McDermott, Schoesler, Fairley, Oemig, Jarrett and Kohl-Welles).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Allows student fees for each academic year to be created or increased by a majority vote of the student government.
- Authorizes the use of student fees for lobbying and to support statewide or national student organizations that engage in lobbying.

**Hearing Date:** 3/24/09

**Staff:** Marsha Reilly (786-7135)

**Background:**

In addition to tuition fees, students at institutions of higher education are charged services and activities fees. These fees are dedicated to fund student activities and programs as well as for repaying bonds and other indebtedness for facilities such as dormitories, hospitals, dining halls, parking facilities, and student, faculty, and employee housing. Students have a strong voice in recommending budgets for services and activities fees through the Services and Activities Fee Committee, and the governing boards of the institutions must adhere to the principle that the committee's desires be given priority consideration.

Generally, the use of public funds for lobbying is prohibited. This does not preclude an agency officer or employee from communicating with the Legislature for requests for legislative action or appropriations necessary for the business of the agency, or providing information or communicating on matters pertaining to the agency. Agencies that expend public funds for these

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restricted lobbying purposes are required to file quarterly statements with the Public Disclosure Commission that identifies the persons who lobbied, the general nature of the lobbying, and the proportionate amount of time and money spent on lobbying.

All six public baccalaureate institutions in the state of Washington are members of the Washington Student Lobby (WSL), plus maintain memberships for the associations of graduate and professional students. In 2007 Bellevue Community College became the first two-year school to join. Other community colleges, technical colleges, and branch campuses often participate as non-voting members. Membership in the WSL is required for a student body to be able to vote and receive the legislative support services provided by the WSL.

**Summary of Bill:**

Voluntary student fees for each academic year may be created or increased by a majority vote of the student government or its equivalent, or by a referendum presented to the student body. The use of those fees is not subject to the statute governing the use of public funds for lobbying.

**Senate Bill Compared to House Bill.** The Senate bill was amended to remove the provision that student fee increases are not subject to the fee increase restrictions of Initiative 960.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.